

## The Middle Ages from Inside

REV. HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

*Reprinted from Studies, June, 1929. The author's footnotes are omitted.*

RARELY has it happened to the present writer to meet with a book in which good and bad workmanship are so strangely combined as in this English version of Caesarius of Heisterbach. The "Dialogus Miraculorum," as many will know who are familiar with the original, possesses in itself a charm which almost qualifies it to rank with the early Franciscan literature now so diligently studied. Dr. G. G. Coulton—it is pleasant for once to find ourselves in agreement with him—has been well advised in selecting this work for translation in the Broadway Medieval Library of which he acts as editor. He contributes an Introduction and is presumably responsible for the well-chosen illustrations which here and there adorn its pages. Baring a remark about St. Thomas Aquinas and the attitude of the saved towards the manifestation of God's justice in the torments of hell, there is nothing in the editor's comments upon the "Dialogus" to which we need take exception.

Caesarius, who entered the Cistercian abbey of Heisterbach in 1198 and became successively master of novices and prior, sets out to instruct the younger members of his Order in the spirit of their religious vocation. With that object he adopted the favorite medieval device of teaching by examples. His book, divided into twelve "Distinctions," is in point of fact nothing but a great collection of stories in which the "Monk" recalls anecdote after anecdote and moralizes on them, while the "Novice," presumably with a view to breaking the monotony of a continuous discourse, occasionally interjects remarks, asks questions, or makes naive reflections upon the incidents recounted. Naturally the greater part of the subject matter is concerned more or less directly with the monastic life, but the method of treatment, which aims at confirming the vocation of aspirants by dwelling on the terrible fate of evil-doers in the world or in the cloister, on the power and malice of the devil, on the

tender pitifulness of the Mother of God, on the wonderful miracles attesting the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, etc., etc., brings us into contact with all kinds of secular matters and with not a few episodes of contemporary history. We have, therefore, a very remarkable and varied picture of the religious aspects of life in northern Europe at the time when St. Francis and St. Dominic were setting great organizations in train to quicken the faith of the southern peoples.

Caesarius, as Dr. Coulton freely proclaims, was a good Cistercian monk, a worthy follower of the traditions of the founders of his Order. In spite of what seems a boundless credulity, he was honest and truth-loving. Moreover, he was not without considerable gifts as a story-teller. An unmistakable sense of humor peeps out every now and then, and he shows freshness and originality in his method of treatment. Whether he was the first to recount the parable of *Date and Dabitur* (Give and It shall be given you) which became famous in after times, I am unable to say; but it is characteristic of him that he evidently took delight in the legend of the venerable stranger who came to the door of the decayed Benedictine abbey where formerly great hospitality and prosperity had prevailed. The porter, we are told, admitted the visitor "secretly and fearfully," and apologized for the lack of more generous welcome, pleading that the house had now fallen into grievous poverty; whereupon, as Caesarius continues:

The other replied: "Two brethren have been driven out from this abbey, and never can it flourish again unless these brethren return. their names are brothers Date and Dabitur"; and then he vanished. I think that he must have been some angelic personage, by whose agency the Lord desired to recall the brethren to their former charity. The porter, who was a lay brother, remembered the names without understanding them, and repeated to the abbot and brethren all that he had heard. Hospitality was renewed, and at once the Lord began to bless them as before.

Two chapters further on, Caesarius drives the lesson home in these very impressive words:

To him, that has the grace of hospitality, and receives his guests with kindness, good will and a cheerful countenance, and who freely welcomes God's poor; to him it is the Lord's will that there shall be given as much, and sometimes . . . a hundredfold in this present life, and he shall have abundance, and in the world to come life everlasting. But he who has not the grace of almsgiving and hos-

pitality, he who has no true welcome for his guests, and is reluctant to look upon the faces of the poor; he who gives them grudgingly just as much as he cannot refuse, from this man, by God's just decree, that which he possesses in temporal wealth either fails of itself, or is taken away and carried off by others, nor is it increased by the offerings of the Faithful.

When Dr. Coulton in his "Medieval Village" devoted so much space to expatiating upon the churchman's alleged lack of sympathy for the peasant, he would have done well, I submit, to temper his picture with a few extracts from Caesarius, for example this pronouncement: "Not only is Christ martyred by infidels, but He is daily pierced and scourged by evil Christians through injuries done to His poor." And taking occasion from this remark our author goes on to relate how, when a certain lay brother shed tears to see a poor man brutally ill-used by the attendants of the Duke of Louvain, our Saviour appeared to that brother the same night in a dream and said: "I thank thee that yesterday thou hadst so much compassion upon Me, when the Duke's chamberlain beat Me so mercilessly without any cause." At these words, we are told, "the lay brother awoke and realized that our Lord still suffers in His members."

Caesarius, one feels, must have been a man with a warm heart, and I do not think that anyone, however prejudiced against Romanism and all that it stands for, could fail to be attracted by the humorous zest with which he tells the long story of his old master Ensfrid, the Dean of St. Andrew's, at Cologne. Ensfrid gave away to the poor everything that came into his hands, and caused endless trouble to his nephew and steward, Frederick, who felt it a duty to check this lavish generosity. One of the most charming incidents is the following:

Once when Frederick . . . had a number of fine pigs which he killed and turned into hams, hanging them up in the kitchen to keep until they should be needed, the dean, who often looked into the kitchen, coveted very much this fine row of hams, and since he could not get any of them from his nephew by begging, and did not like to take them openly, he thought out a holy trick, a pious trick, a trick well worthy of remembrance. As often as he found nobody in the kitchen, he went in stealthily, or if there were any servants there he sent them out, and climbed up the steps to the row of hams, and cut out slices from the part of each ham that was next the wall, until he had taken about half of each. The front part however he left untouched, so that the cutting of the rest might

escape unnoticed. This he did for many days and distributed the flesh thus abstracted to widows, to anyone in want, and to orphans. At length the theft of the household goods was discovered, the thief was sought for and found without difficulty.

Frederick was furious; the dean said nothing until the former complained that he had lost what belonged to the brethren and the supplies of the whole year; and then the holy man tried to appease him with such words as he could, saying, "My good kinsman, it is surely better that you should suffer a little loss than that the poor should have died of hunger. The Lord will give you a full reward." And with these words Frederick was appeased, and upbraided him no more.

Hardly less amusing is the account of Ensfrid's simplicity in allowing the choir boys to eat his cherries, with the result that they all made themselves ill, and the story of his giving away his breeches to a poor beggar, in place of which he wrapped his cloak around him to hide the absence of the missing garment. Unfortunately his nephew became suspicious of the truth and mischievously plied him with questions until the good old man grew scarlet with confusion. Dean Ensfrid's benevolent friends had a hard task to keep him decently clad, but it occurred to them at last that they might exercise some control by *lending* him the garments instead of making him a present of them. However even then the only result seems to have been that he wore them a little longer than usual.

Caesarius, while evidently touched as well as amused by the humor of these and similar incidents, was by no means blind to the fact that the world at large could not be run on those lines. There is much shrewd good sense in the comment which he offers in this connection.

The simple man is sometimes compared to a clown or jester, for as their words or actions would often give offense in the mouth or hands of one who is not a jester, and would be worthy of punishment, yet when the same things are said or done by a jester they amuse us; and so it is with the simple-minded. The simple-minded, if I may so put it, are the jesters of God and His holy angels. But if those who are not really simple-minded were to act in the same way, they would certainly offend God, though He is pleased with these very things when the simple-minded do them.

Very charming again and human in its truth to child nature is this little incident which Caesarius inserts in his "Distinction on Temptations":

Last year in a convent of our Order called Yesse, in Frisia, two little girls were put to learn lessons together. Since both were zeal-

ous scholars, a rivalry arose between them that each might surpass the other in industry and knowledge. Meanwhile it happened that one of them fell ill; and she, envious of the advance of her companion, began to be sorely tried by her fear that the other might make great strides in her absence. And so she asked for the prioress and made her prayer to her, saying: "Good mistress, when my mother comes to see me, I will ask her for sixpence (*sex denarii*) which I will give to you if you will stop my sister from going on with her studies until I am well again, because I am afraid of her getting ahead of me." At which the prioress laughed, in great admiration of the child's keenness.

The story prompts the Novice to ask: "What is the right medicine against envy?" And there is surely wisdom in the Monk's laconic reply: "Loving service."

Let me add just one other illustration of the many delightful things contained in this book, although the story is unfortunately too long to allow of textual quotation. It concerns two nuns who both lost their tempers badly in a dispute over the rival merits of their respective patrons, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. They had often wrangled over this matter before, and they used to grow so hot in arguing the point that the abbess could hardly control them. One night, however, a vision was vouchsafed to each of the two. St. John Baptist appeared to his own particular client and proved to her that his claims to sanctity were as nothing in comparison with those of the Evangelist, while the Evangelist showed himself to the other disputant and demonstrated as convincingly that the Precursor was far more exalted than himself. Both of the heavenly visitors, however, insisted on the same course of action, *viz.*, that his self-constituted champion should own herself in the wrong, and that in the presence of their Reverend Mother she should prostrate herself at her sister's feet and humbly beg forgiveness. The program was duly carried out, much, we may believe, to the contentment of the Mother Abbess, "who warned them never in future to dispute about the merits of the saints, which are known to God alone."

It must not, of course, be supposed that all the 700 or 800 stories told by Caesarius in his *Dialogus* are as free from any possible ground of offense as those just referred to. There is a great deal about devils and their intervention in human affairs, about souls hideously tormented in hell or purgatory, about miracles and visions which even

the most docile believer in the supernatural would nowadays hesitate to accept as historical facts. There are even stories which are hardly edifying, so extravagantly do they extol the favor shown to sinners by the Mother of Mercy, stories in which a single casual act of devotion to her seems to outweigh a whole lifetime of immorality and reckless crime. The view thus presented of God's justice is not always reconcilable with the theological principles which were as clearly laid down by the teachers of that day as they are now. But none the less the whole presents a wonderful picture of the religious mentality and the material conditions of the century in which Caesarius wrote. There are things good and evil, brutal punishments and little human justice; scandalous licence in the Church and sometimes even in the cloister; everywhere war, famine, plague and tyrannous oppression of the poor; but with all this there is also a very real sense of sin and faith in Jesus Christ, an appreciation of the beauty of purity and charity and renunciation, and above all the example of countless holy lives which only show the brighter for the darkness which surrounded them.

For the selection of this work of Caesarius and for the literary quality of the translation as a whole, readers have every reason to be grateful. If the Rev. H. Scott, who began it, had lived to complete his task, there would probably have been little reason to complain; but the slipshod methods of Mr. Swinton Bland who, in spite of an unfortunate previous experience in rendering into English the Autobiography of Guibert de Nogent, made bold to supply the place of Mr. Scott, have adorned the second volume with an almost unparalleled collection of blunders. No doubt the text of the continuation reads smoothly enough, but nearly everywhere, when any technical point occurs, the meaning is missed, and often the passage is converted into nonsense. If I go into some detail in justifying this criticism, my excuse must be that a book like that of Caesarius, which abounds in ceremonial minutiae and which has an exceptional interest for Catholic readers, ought not to be left to the tender mercies of a translator who is evidently quite unfamiliar with liturgical matters and knows little or nothing about either monasticism or medieval history. You do not engage a man who has never studied science to translate a book on chemistry, nor do you go to a

naturalist if you want an English rendering of a treatise on music. Miss Evelyn Underhill lately, in reviewing this same translation, spoke of its "amusing stories, full of priceless information of the details of monastic routine." The description would be true enough if we were concerned with the Latin original, but the "details of monastic routine" will prove utterly misleading if we put confidence in the interpretation provided in the later sections of the book before us. I venture to assume that Mr. Scott must be mainly responsible for the rendering in the first volume and Mr. Bland for the rest. One indication which confirms this view is the following: we learn from Dr. Coulton's Introduction that Mr. Scott continued his task even when, after a second paralytic stroke, he became unable to write, "dictating to his wife until his words were no longer intelligible." Now in Dist. VII, ch. 23 we have the story of a man whose tongue was cut out by the Albigensian heretics, and to whom our Lady brought a new one saying: "Because thou wast deprived of thy tongue for the sake of thy faith in my tongue and for the honor shown to me, behold I restore it thee." There is clearly something wrong about "thy faith in my tongue," and turning to the Latin one finds *propter fidem filii mei*. No doubt the stricken man meant to dictate "thy faith is my Son," but he was indistinctly heard, and the blunder, like many others, has passed undetected in Mr. Bland's supposed "revision" of his manuscript.

Glancing casually through the translation before us, the first conundrum which awakened suspicion that all was not quite so well with this smoothly written narrative as its easy flow suggested, occurred in a Eucharistic story (Dist. IX, ch. 61) beginning thus:

A deacon of Steinveld . . . Gerald by name, apostatizing, pretended that he had received priests' orders about four times, and the unhappy man was celebrating as it were his first Mass, a priest instructing him, in Cologne in the Church of St. Michael, etc.

A stranger who declared he had "received priest's orders about four times" would not, one imagines, have been admitted without question to say his first Mass by even the most easy-going of medieval parochi. I was tempted, therefore, to see how this curious claim was phrased in the Latin of Caesarius. It runs: *Diaconus quidam . . . circa quatuor*

*tempora se ordinem sacerdotalem suscepisse finxit.* In plain English, "the deacon pretended that he had been ordained priest at the Ember days or thereabouts."

Is it too much to expect that a scholar employed on such a task ought to have heard of *les quatre temps*, even if he did not know the German *Quatember*, (quat-tempora), which suggests a possible, if unsatisfactory, derivation of our English word? But, in any case, "about four times" as a rendering of *circa quatuor tempora* is an extraordinary suggestion to come from "the late Headmaster of Ripon School," whom Dr. Coulton highly commends as a translator on the ground of "his familiarity with classical Latin."

But let us take a few more examples. In Dist. VIII, ch. 26, we may read the story of a deadly feud between two bands of knights. One party had gone to church to say their prayers, presumably leaving their arms at the door, and meanwhile an old woman treacherously betrayed them to their enemies. The other band rushed in, and according to the translation "even cut off the arms of the very crucifix and slew about 8,000 soldiers in the church." Mr. Bland seems to have had no misgiving about the slaughter of 8,000 men in a small village church, though the text of Caesarius when one consults it tells us that *eight* soldiers, or rather knights, were killed—not eight thousand. But this is a detail. The really interesting point is the judgment which befell the old woman who betrayed them. She was, so Mr. Bland's translation informs us, "suffocated during Mass by a heat stroke." The Latin says *tempore messis nimio calore aeris suffocata est.* *Tempore messis* means of course "in the harvest season" and has nothing to do with Mass. One is reminded of the Anglican army chaplain when our troops were in France, who having been deputed to look after the mess arrangements of his division, ordered a dozen kilos of cheese—"C'est pour la messe, vous savez," he added, his knowledge of the French tongue being limited. Upon which the grocer is said to have exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu, quelle religion!*" The incident, however, is perhaps apocryphal. But in this case the words "during Mass" as a rendering of *tempore messis* stand printed for all to see on p. 27 of Mr. Bland's second volume.

Such lapses as the above may not be of any particular importance, but in the latter part of the work they swarm.



When Caesarius discusses briefly the theology of the Blessed Sacrament, his translator renders the scholastic term *accidentia*, not as accidents, but as "unessentials" (II. 107). When a reference occurs to the "Sentences," this appears as "in the catechism" (II. 108). The monastic "scapular" figures as a "broad cape," which it certainly is not (II. 98). *Post tertiam*, which means "after the hour of terce," is interpreted as "three days later," in spite of the plain statement that the two Masses of which there is question were celebrated on the same morning (II. 134). *Sacerdotes legales*, i.e., the priests of the Old Law, becomes in the version before us "regular priests" (II. 168). Mr. Bland has apparently never heard of the *panes propositionis*, which the Douai Bible renders "loaves of proposition" (A. V. Shewbread, R. V. presence-bread), and he makes nonsense of the passage by translating these words as "wafers that were to be used"; while *erantque de simila mundissima* is converted into "and they were of the purest form," instead of "the finest flour" (II. 168). The whole point of the Old Testament reference has been missed, but the reader who has only the English before him will suspect nothing wrong. Again, when we are told (II. 246) of a monk "who gladly sung the high notes," if one looks up the Latin it is to find that, though he shirked manual labor, he sang quite vigorously in choir; *alte cantabat* has nothing to do with the pitch of his voice. Again "in the time of King Philip, the Roman Emperor" (II. 274) proves to be *tempore Philippi regis romani*, or in other words, King of the Romans. Of a priest who had omitted certain suffrages for the dead which he was bound to say and who in consequence had died miserably, Caesarius remarks *nullam fecerat de eadem negligentia confessionem*, which in Mr. Bland's view means "with his usual carelessness he made no confession" (II. 331). Similarly a monk who, longed to quit this world *propter abbatem inordinatum*, i.e., because his abbot led a disorderly life, is represented as objecting to him as a man "unordained" (II. 260). Nevertheless the story itself tells us that the same monk received Extreme Unction at this "unordained" abbot's hands, which seems a little inconsistent. Of another monk we are told (II. 145) that "coming to the altar he made an intention in his prayer towards the holy cross," which on reference to the Latin proves to be "and coming

to the altar of the Holy Cross, he set about his prayers" (*Veniensque ad altare sanctae crucis orationi intendit*). In II. 129, it is stated that "three things are required in the priest that he may be able to consecrate; and these are ritual, words and intention." Of course Caesarius never said anything so foolish. What he wrote was *Ordo, verba, intentio*. *Ordo* means Holy Orders; no cleric can consecrate unless he be ordained. When a saintly monk, confined to bed, is said, by some strange telepathic faculty, to have been able to tell "who sang the responses and what lessons were read at evensong" (II. 149), the text naturally does not mention evensong, but speaks of *vigilias*—i.e., the night office. Similarly, when we read of a priest who was celebrating Mass that, "when he came to the Lord's Prayer at which the uncovered chalice is generally placed upon the altar, he saw in it human blood" (II. 122), this describes no strange peculiarity of the Cistercian rite, as the unsuspecting reader would be led to infer. All that is meant is that the chalice, having been uncovered and raised at the so-called "little elevation," is then set down again upon the altar. As for the statement (II. 132) about "the tray on which silver cups are wont to be carried by communicants" this is a wild guess at the meaning for which there is no sort of warrant in the text. Still more unpardonable is the oversight, to use no harsher term, which has led Mr. Bland in at least two places (II. 235 and 315) to translate *psalterium*, which means of course the whole psalter of 150 psalms, as if it was the same thing as *psalmus*. The context alone would have shown that the mention of one or two psalms was ridiculous.

Another point, connected with ritual, which recurs again and again and upon which both translators have gone wrong, is the word *veniae*. *Veniae* were not prayers for pardon or mental acts, but postures of the body, deep inclinations which most often took the form of an absolute prostration face downwards. When Theodoric and Bernard, as we are told in Dist. I, ch. 21, were converted by the spectacle they witnessed beside the grave of a newly buried monk, what impressed them was not the prayers said, but the sight of the whole community falling on their faces. The story (Dist. VII, ch. 48) of our Lady teaching a young nun how she ought to perform her *venia*, should, one would think, have made the matter

clear. But the translator makes the Blessed Virgin tell her "You ought to say to me every day the sequence *Ave Dei Genitrix*, and at every verse to pray for pardon." What she really instructed the sister to do was to make a fresh prostration at every clause. So again (II. 99) we have "prayers and tears" where the Latin gives *veniis et lacrimis* and (II. 154) "three Paters and the same number of prayers for pardon" (*cum totidem veniis*). Equally misleading is a liturgical detail we find referred to in the account of the holy monk Christian of Hemmenrode:

At another time when, at the beginning of lauds, the psalm *Deus misereatur nostri* was being sung, he saw the right hand of God spread over the choir and giving the blessing to the convent. On account of this the concession was made to the lay brethren that they should sing that psalm on festivals.

But the lay brethren did not sing psalms, neither does Caesarius say anything of the sort. What he wrote is *Ob quam causam concessum est fratribus conversis in minoribus festis illum psalmum peraudire*, i.e., that on certain festivals the lay brothers were allowed to hear that psalm sung through, on account of the blessing God was believed to impart at the singing of it. They would otherwise have been required to leave the church before it began.

Another observance which has proved a pitfall for the translator is the dedication of Saturday to our Lady. When we are told of "fasting on Fridays in reverence of the Sabbath" (I. 513), the ordinary reader will erroneously conclude that this has something to do with Sabbatarianism or Sunday observance; and similarly a *jejunium trium sabbatorum usque post solis occasum* does not mean, as it is said to do (I. 492), "a three weeks' fast till the set of sun," but the observance of such a fast on three separate Saturdays. The simple fact is that one at least of the translators proves himself to be entirely unacquainted with medieval thought, observances or nomenclature. Nothing, for example, is more common in chroniclers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than to find allusion made to the "ignis sacer," or "St. Anthony's fire." It was a well-known disease often ravaging whole provinces, a gangrenous affection, akin to ergotism, which consumed the extremities as if they had been burnt. When Caesarius, then, tells us of a priest *cuius manus sacer ignis devoravit*, he is thinking

of something quite different from what is suggested by the translation (II. 163) "his hands were devoured by fire from on high."

This is a pretty long list of *corrigenda*, though it is limited to simpler cases in which a knowledge of the context is not required. It might, in truth, be almost indefinitely extended, and a large crop might be added of misprints and mispunctuations. But the irony of the situation lies in the fact that the work has appeared under the editorship of Dr. G. G. Coulton who spends endless time in challenging his opponents to a contest which will be "an object lesson in Roman Catholic and Protestant accuracy." Dr. Coulton announces that he is even now engaged in the preparation of a book to be called "Roman Catholic Truth up to Date" in which "the almost incredible blunders" of his numerous antagonists will be exposed and demolished. But, after all, *inimici hominis domestici ejus*. If Dr. Coulton devoted a little more of his energies to keeping his own house in order, he might be less unsuccessful in convincing the world of his entire rightness in castigating the faults of other people. In the meanwhile it is surely a pity that an otherwise satisfactory translation of so interesting a book as "Dialogus" should be handicapped by a crowd of mistakes and absurdities which a little attention by a competent reviser could easily have eliminated.

## The Dowry of Mary's Daughters

REV. RUDOLPH J. EICHHORN, S.J.

*A baccalaureate sermon, by the President of Canisius College, given at the Commencement Exercises of D'Youville College, Buffalo, May 31, 1930.*

*Behold my lord hath given everything to me . . . nor is there anything that is not in my power or that he hath not handed over to me (Gen. xxxix, 8-9).*

HOW appropriate it is that this day, the feast of Our Lady, the Mediatrix of All Graces, should have been chosen as the day on which your scholastic efforts are crowned in solemn religious rites! We celebrate today not only Mary's pre-eminence over all natural creation, but also her queenly domination of the empire of grace. We

look upon her not alone as the mother who pleads our cause with her Divine Son, but also as the gracious almoner of His supernatural favors. With every grace was Mary endowed by the Son of God, because He would be her Son too. With every grace does she dower mankind today, for, as God came to man through her, through her, too, must man go to God.

This day is most uniquely appropriate for you, my dear graduates, because you, too, in a certain sense, are mediatrices between God and man. For this reason God has endowed you with every gift. I speak not merely of life and health and strength, and a Catholic environment and an ordinary Catholic education and sacramental riches. Nearly all these things are the heritage of all those dwelling in the household of the Faith. But I speak more of those special graces placed at the disposal of the Catholic girl in this century and in this land. Thirty years ago I was present at the dedication of Trinity College, one of the first Catholic colleges for women in this country, and today we have eighty-nine colleges for the higher education of Catholic womanhood. It was no mere accident that these colleges multiplied. Rather I think it was by a special providence of God that these strongholds of faith and morals increased in this generation. The girls of other days had not your perils to face. They led a comparatively sheltered life. They had not invaded the marts of commerce in such large numbers. Their contacts with a materialistic philosophy in books and magazines, and above all in conversation, were fewer. Perversion did not parade as literature; liberty of thought was not synonymous with license in expression; psychology still meant a science connected with a soul; behavior did not connote behaviorism; the value of a life was reckoned in terms of Christ's sacrifice and not by economic statistics; natural philanthropy had not entirely supplanted supernatural charity; hygiene was not a substitute for purity; and the phosphorescence of genius did not blind one to the decay whence it often sprang.

But the old days have changed. Whether we like it or not, the modern girl lives in an atmosphere vibrant with the voices of skepticism, materialism, and naturalism. She hears not only the open challenge of her beliefs, but worse still, the covert insinuation that her creed is medieval and her code of morals outmoded. Dulness is the unpardonable

sin, and smartness the standard of success. "Save the surface and you save all" is not only an advertising slogan, but it has become the unique commandment of the twentieth century. In an age when it has become the big thing to belittle God, when it has become the smart thing to stultify Omnipotence, when the cynic, the pessimist, the parvenu philosopher find short cuts to fame by making God infamous, when romancing historians tire of sinking their shafts in men and aim to riddle God, when romancing scientists build the skeletal structure of man's supposititious ancestor from dubious fragments of bone, when romancing agnostics take away the capital letter from God and split Him up into a number of pagan deities to serve as happy disguises for their vices, and when all this is done on the plea that enlightened humanity has at last won free from the shackles of "superstition" and dogma, then it is high time not only for the clergy, but also for the laity, not only for our young men, but also and especially for our young women, to be panoplied with the rational armor that can withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous falsehood, and to be equipped with every weapon that lies at hand in the vast arsenal of truth.

And so I say that this unparalleled increase in Catholic colleges for women is an act of the special providence of God. It is producing in you Catholic girl graduates a superior class, ready to cope with and vanquish the pseudo-superior sophistication of a basically unsound intellectual attack. I have no fear lest you become conscious of your lofty transcendence over the dwarfish stature of those who assail your creed and your code; rather I urge you to cultivate this consciousness. As Belloc so well says of your adversaries, few of them are your intellectual equals. The keen point of your logic can reach the heart of the sophisms of any agnostic doctrinaire. Mind, I am not advocating intellectual snobbishness on your part. I am not one who would urge you to play the snob if you would sway the mob. No, I am too alive to the derivation of snob to apply that word to the Catholic girl graduate. "Snob" was the contraction for *sine nobilitate*—without nobility, title, breeding—written against the name of commoners in the old days at Oxford. The very nobility of your being cries out against the use of this word in your case. But I do urge you to take a righteous pride in your intellectual dowry

and to feel a sense of merited superiority when anyone dares to attack your ideas and ideals of morality and belief. For you are the heiresses of the truth of all the ages. You are the beneficiaries of a philosophical system that is invulnerable. You are the elect custodians of the only faith that suffers not from the pitiless scrutiny of human reason, and yet dares as well to unveil the Divine Mind. You are the possessors of the secret of human worth; you have the true answer to the question of why we behave as human beings. The pearls of wisdom have come to you as touchstones of thought. Basic principles of mental science, lofty norms of moral conduct, correct canons of literary and historical criticism are the wealth you have won. Wisdom has espoused you and endowed you with all its goods. Wisdom? Yes, Eternal Wisdom has set you apart in this generation, and has jeweled your mind with heavenly truth and has compassed your will with virtue's strength.

It is axiomatic in the spiritual life that God appoints no man to a task without giving him the special grace to fulfil his office. And the converse is true that God gives man talents that may lie idle only at man's peril. If this be true, and further, if every woman is to some man the rock of his ambition and the spur of his honor, then what a force for good should womanhood be, when aureoled not only with its native graciousness, but also with the exquisite culture of a singularly complete Catholic education! Shall I urge you, then, to leadership and service? The terms are outworn like coins that have been sweated of their value. But I have called you mediatresses between God and man, and somehow you must use your unique privileges, your special pre-eminence, your intellectual dowry for the purpose of bridging the chasm between God and man.

The result of your education must be like that definition of poetry: "The exquisite expression of exquisite impressions." Self-expression has become a cant term like "service" and "leadership." It really means selfishness; it means that the individual considers himself freed from the claims of the nature to which he belongs; it is individualism run riot. Or it may mean the sketching of the human composite out of perspective; or an exaggerated, distorted emphasis upon only one side of self; or the dissociating of one segment of self from its relations with the complete being. So we have self-expression in literature, and certain writers pen

the decadent effusions of a morbid brain. So we have self-expression in modes of living, and people stress the brutish side of human nature to the complete exclusion of the spiritual. "One must live one's own life" is the cry, forgetting that others must live their lives, too, and that the life of each individual is bound up inextricably with countless other lives.

I would urge you, then, to set before the world the true concept of self-expression; be your true selves; be living exemplars of the nice adjustment between the spiritual and the material, the intellectual and the moral, that alone becomes the dignity of human nature. Only in this perfectly proportioned symmetry of the diverse excellences of human nature will the true beauty of life be found.

You ask me how you can accomplish this. Perhaps I have already indicated various ways. You are perfectly equipped to repel any attack on your creed or your code. The manifold "isms" of error are ridiculously impotent to disturb your intellectual poise. Evil, with protean disguise, is powerless to deceive you by its substitution of convention for morality. The sacred ideals you possess of modesty and marriage and motherhood cannot be twisted in your minds by the specious reasonings of charlatanic moralists. With your superb dowry, knowledge *is* power, a power that gives you a mental and moral sureness, a power that can be imparted by you in speech and writing and example to your less fortunate sisters, a power that can be exercised to steady and uplift the men of your generation.

Expressing your true selves as the singularly privileged daughters of God, you will inevitably lift mankind nearer to God, and become mediatresses between God and man, in a sense like Mary your Mother. For with the help of God's grace in you and them, all will see in you the reflection—faint, if you will—of her who is the Mother of Good Counsel, and the Tower of Ivory, and the Seat of Wisdom, and the very Gate of Heaven.



## Musings on a Bookrack

REV. C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

*Reprinted from the Catholic Times.*

I HAVE just been studying the figures for last year's [1929] sale of pamphlets in the Westminster Cathedral C.T.S. bookcase. They are of enormous interest. They are an additional argument for hoping that the Liverpool Cathedral will very soon be sufficiently started to attract the vast crowds that it is sure to do; for few of those crowds (among whom many will come out of curiosity) but will cluster round the C.T.S. pamphlets there exhibited.

I have admired the Westminster system—not only is there the long case flat against the wall; but a smaller case with booklets on either side of it stands well out from the wall, so that people can cluster, as I said, all around it.

In eighteen years of slow growth those hard workers have now sold over a million pamphlets. Progress is now bound to be accelerated, and it is the place to quote St. Paul's advice to the Philippians (which I love so much): "From whatever point you have reached, from that go forward!"

It is impossible to shut one's eyes (even if one wanted to) to that liturgical revival so noticeable throughout the Church. The *Catholic Times* printed some time ago a few papers on the Mass. These, somewhat expanded, were reprinted as a C.T.S. pamphlet: "At Mass." At Westminster alone 7,050 of these have been sold in less than six months.

The *Catholic Times* had "sensed" the need and desire to which such papers would correspond. Of course a new pamphlet has a special chance: but I was surprised to find that "Bernadette of Lourdes" sold only 700 more than "At Mass," and only the Life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux sells better than Bernadette's does.

But all liturgical pamphlets seem to go well: no fewer than 3,300 copies of the Good Friday Mass, translated and explained, were sold in that one church. Link up with this what we wrote of recently—the Latin classes recently started in London.

Not only applicants have come in such quantities that Miss Lowe is having to divide up her pupils, and I think will have to have subordinate teachers, but alike from South London and from Blackpool have I heard of similar classes which, it is at least hoped, may be developed, so that soon all over the country people may learn to understand not only what is being done at Mass (as we may hope they always have), but the way and the words in which it is being done.

May I link this up yet further with two other movements? The *Catholic Times* has recently had much to say about the really magnificent enthusiasm for the Church's Chant, displayed not least in the North at the instigation of the Archbishop of Liverpool.

I would like to see a little (or large) Latin class functioning alongside of any music school. Music and meaning reinforce one another. It would be difficult to explain the meaning of each word separately, and afresh each time, when a piece of Chant was being taught.

If people approach the music ready-equipped with a power of seeing at a glance (even roughly) what the words must mean, how much more quickly will the inner value of the music reveal itself! And perhaps the Converts' Aid Society would consider this—convert clergymen are often (it is known) in desperate straits. Sheer charity is difficult for the society to administer, distasteful for the convert to receive. He would like to be doing a little work, and earn it. But, as a rule, what can he possibly do? A clergyman's training does not fit him for ordinary remunerative work. But most clergymen have learnt Latin; if not much—well, not much is needed for teaching what the liturgy demands.

God helping me, I hope to receive into the Church three such clergymen before Easter: of these, two will have to work very hard, even to survive. In any one large town (where the liturgical movement is likely to be thriving) one clergyman could fill all his extra time (and that may mean all his time) by taking a series of small Latin classes, and so keep his head above the financial waters.

The Converts' Aid Society would itself be thus not a little eased, for if a man can legitimately earn he needs less exterior assistance, and the society would be more free to help the others who might be unable to teach.

I cannot but be glad that the little pamphlet on Baptism and Churching has almost reached a 2,000 sale—anyhow, has obtained an increase of 850 over the previous year. For, in view of the overwhelming importance of the Sacrament without which no other Sacraments avail, and in view of the extreme antiquity and beauty of the ceremonies with which the Church has surrounded it, there is a special reason for wishing the administration of Baptism to be followed with loving accuracy and consolation.

And it may be that parish priests have found (I have so often heard it!) that the ceremony of "churching" is not rarely misunderstood and all but disliked. For the Jewish notion that some sort of at least legal or ritual taint attaches to a mother after childbirth still seems to survive.

And as, thanks largely to St. Paul, Christians have little consciousness of a taint that is merely "legal" or "ceremonial," people tend to think that any taint implies a moral taint; and they cannot see why there should be any hint of that in the circumstances.

There is not. Most emphatically there is not. "Churching" is a purely joyous ceremony, one of welcome and thanksgiving; and the priest who comes to the door of the church to salute the happy mother wears the white stole of festivity.

Naturally I could not but be glad to know that "The Sea and Its Apostolate" has sold at the rate of 5,560 in that single church: on September 7, I think, there will be a great sea ceremony in Liverpool—well, that will provide an admirable chance for that linking together of Catholic activities which makes the whole output so much more vital and efficacious.

For, rather as pilgrimages to Lourdes or to Rome provide a great opportunity of causing information concerning those two cities to reach the traveler, by way of pamphlets, so any great occasion (such as Emancipation Year) does the same.

And I would widen this notion and apply it to almost half the sermons preached. I would like a special set of C.T.S. pamphlets, appropriate to the sermon, or series of sermons, that a priest intends to preach, to be obtained, placed at the bottom of the church, alluded to emphatically in the sermon, and handed out by intelligent lay people to the congregation as it leaves.

For, do you imagine that the mere placing of a lot of booklets on a table is going to suffice to make people notice, attend to, and purchase them? Little does he know our quaint national character who imagines that! We have the power of staring at a thing without seeing it; of being quite ready to take what is put into our hand, but not of putting out that hand spontaneously!

And correspondingly, I would like a new C.T.S. pamphlet to be somewhat emphatically brought to the notice of a priest, who might then arrange at least one sermon so as to bring the topic to his congregation's mind. The pamphlet should assist the sermon, and vice versa.

A small note based on observation. I am glad that the C.T.S. seems to be abandoning, on the whole, deep crimson-red covers. The color is warm, and pleasant; but you cannot see black print upon it. The bright but thick color eats into the black and renders it invisible. Even a clear yellow is apt to spread its rays out and gnaw into the black; but it is a clear and not a thick color, and does not do real harm.

I think, too, that while decoration may make a cover attractive (has the C.T.S. tried selling the same pamphlet in a plain and in a decorated cover, and testing the results? That might be interesting), yet I am sure that anything like fussy decoration tends to obscure the title. The eye is pulled this way and that across the surface. This is eminently true about advertisements.

I have read an amazing American book about advertising—about 700 pages long, making a comparative study of methods—taking a quite German amount of trouble about details. Your eye must go straight to the one important point, and the rest must support that if it can. You must not have to seek and find the point, or risk concentrating on anything else.

Anyhow, for one church, even though an exceptionally visited one, to have sold 73,504 pamphlets in one year is a splendid record, largely due, to be frank, to its exceptional and splendid box-tenders!